

LEASE OF LANDS ON FORT SILL MILITARY  
RESERVATION.

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LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

RELATING TO

LEASING LANDS ON THE FORT SILL MILITARY RESERVATION.

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JANUARY 22, 1902.—Referred to the Committee on Military Affairs and ordered to be printed.

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WAR DEPARTMENT,  
*Washington, January 18, 1902.*

SIR: The question of the leasing of lands upon the wood reserve of the Fort Sill Reservation, Okla., has been brought to the attention of this Department, both by the Department of the Interior and by the local military authorities.

From correspondence had with the Department of the Interior, it appears that the Fort Sill Military Reservation is not now embraced within the Indian reservation. By the agreement of October 21, 1892, the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache Indians ceded and relinquished to the United States all their right, title, and interest in and to the lands embraced within the Fort Sill Military Reservation, which agreement was ratified by the act of Congress of June 7, 1900, and that after the date of the agreement, but before its ratification, the original Fort Sill Military Reservation was enlarged by Executive order, which enlargement or extension embraced about 27,000 acres, and was consented to by the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache Indians.

The object of the extension, as is stated by the Indian Office to have been understood at the time, was for the purpose of permanently locating the Apache prisoners of war thereon. Since the opening of the Kiowa and Comanche reservation to public settlement, on August 6 last, the Indian Office claims no jurisdiction or supervision over the land embraced within the Fort Sill Military Reservation, but holds that the same is under the jurisdiction and control of the War Department.

It appears that for a number of years the Indian Department has

leased the wood reserve, or such part of it as was suitable, to cattlemen for grazing purposes, and that the proceeds of such leases have been taken up and paid out as grass money to the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache Indians. The commanding officer of Fort Sill has recommended to this Department that leases of lands on the wood reserve at that post, for grazing purposes only, be made, for a period of three or five years, to the highest bidder, after due public notice, remarking that the grazing of cattle upon it will benefit and in no way be a detriment to the property. Said recommendation has the approval of the department commander, and, in an indorsement upon the papers in the case, Capt. Garrand Sayre, Eighth Cavalry, in charge of Apache prisoners of war, remarks under date of September 23 last:

It has been my intention to ask that Congress, at its coming session, make an appropriation for the support of these Indians, as was done last year; but if the leasing of this reservation for their benefit is allowed, no appropriation will be asked for.

In a communication addressed to the Department by Captain Sayre, he requests authority to sell stone, from the quarries on the military reservation, for the benefit of the Apache prisoners of war. He states that the reservation contains an unlimited quantity of good building stone, for which there is a demand in the vicinity of the post, and that it is proposed to charge a uniform and moderate price for the stone, all sales to be made by the quartermaster, under the direction of the commanding officer, and the money so obtained to be expended in repairing and improving the dwellings of the Apache prisoners of war, who are not so well housed as are the Comanches and Kiowas who live in the vicinity, and whose houses are now badly in need of repairs, adding that such sales are frequently made by Indian agents. Said recommendation is approved both by the post and department commanders.

Under existing laws the Secretary of War has authority to lease any part of the Fort Sill Reservation for grazing purposes that may not for the time be required for public use (act of July 28, 1892, 27 Stats., 321), but is not authorized to expend the money derived from such leases for the benefit of the Apache prisoners of war.

In view of the facts in the case, as above presented, it is recommended that such legislation be had by Congress as will authorize the proceeds of the proposed leases of lands upon the Fort Sill Reservation to be applied to the benefit of the Apache prisoners of war, and as will also authorize the sale of stone from the quarries on said reservation, the proceeds of such sales to be likewise applied to the benefit of said prisoners.

Very respectfully,

ELIHU ROOT,  
*Secretary of War.*

THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.